

NOTE: This Executive order was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 7, and it was published in the *Federal Register* on February 8.

**Remarks at the National
Prayer Breakfast**
February 7, 2002

Thank you very much, John. Laura and I are really honored to join you this morning to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the National Prayer Breakfast. And Admiral Clark, whatever prayer you used for eloquence, worked. [*Laughter*] I appreciate your message, and I appreciate your service to our great country.

I want to thank Jon Kyl and Judge Sentelle for their words, and CeCe for your music. I appreciate getting the chance to meet Joe Finley, New York City firefighter. He's a living example of what sacrifice and courage means. Thank you for coming, Joe.

I want to thank Congressman Bart Stupak. I really appreciate the fact that my National Security Adviser, Condoleezza Rice, is here to offer prayer. I appreciate the members of my Cabinet who are here. I want to say hello to the Members of Congress.

I'm particularly grateful to Lisa Beamer for her reading and for her example. I appreciate her example of faith made stronger in trial. In the worst moments of her life, Lisa has been a model of grace, her own and the grace of God. And all America welcomes into the world Todd and Lisa's new daughter, Morgan Kay Beamer.

Since we met last year, millions of Americans have been led to prayer. They have prayed for comfort in time of grief, for understanding in a time of anger, for protection in a time of uncertainty. Many, including me, have been on bended knee. The prayers of this Nation are a part of the good that has come from the evil of September the 11th, more good than we could ever have predicted. Tragedy has brought forth the courage and the generosity of our people.

None of us would ever wish on anyone what happened on that day. Yet, as with each life, sorrows we would not choose can bring wisdom and strength gained in no other way. This insight is central to many faiths and cer-

tainly to the faith that finds hope and comfort in a cross.

Every religion is welcomed in our country; all are practiced here. Many of our good citizens profess no religion at all. Our country has never had an official faith. Yet we have all been witnesses these past 21 weeks to the power of faith to see us through the hurt and loss that has come to our country.

Faith gives the assurance that our lives and our history have a moral design. As individuals, we know that suffering is temporary, and hope is eternal. As a nation, we know that the ruthless will not inherit the Earth. Faith teaches humility and, with it, tolerance. Once we have recognized God's image in ourselves, we must recognize it in every human being.

Respect for the dignity of others can be found outside of religion, just as intolerance is sometimes found within it. Yet for millions of Americans, the practice of tolerance is a command of faith. When our country was attacked, Americans did not respond with bigotry. People from other countries and cultures have been treated with respect, and this is one victory in the war against terror.

At the same time, faith shows us the reality of good and the reality of evil. Some acts and choices in this world have eternal consequences. It is always and everywhere wrong to target and kill the innocent. It is always and everywhere wrong to be cruel and hateful, to enslave and oppress. It is always and everywhere right to be kind and just, to protect the lives of others, and to lay down your life for a friend.

The men and women who charged into burning buildings to save others, those who fought the hijackers were not confused about the difference between right and wrong. They knew the difference. They knew their duty. And we know their sacrifice was not in vain.

Faith shows us the way to self-giving, to love our neighbor as we would want to be loved ourselves. In service to others, we find deep human fulfillment. And as acts of service are multiplied, our Nation becomes a more welcoming place for the weak and a better place for those who suffer and grieve.

For half a century now, the National Prayer Breakfast has been a symbol of the vital

place of faith in the life of our Nation. You've reminded generations of leaders of a purpose and a power greater than their own. In times of calm and in times of crisis, you've called us to prayer.

In this time of testing for our Nation, my family and I have been blessed by the prayers of countless of Americans. We have felt their sustaining power, and we're incredibly grateful. Tremendous challenges await this Nation, and there will be hardships ahead. Faith will not make our path easy, but it will give us strength for the journey.

The promise of faith is not the absence of suffering; it is the presence of grace. And at every step we are secure in knowing that suffering produces perseverance, and perseverance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint.

May God bless you, and may God continue to bless America.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:45 a.m. in the International Ballroom at the Washington Hilton Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Senator John Edwards of North Carolina; Senator Jon Kyl of Arizona; Judge David Bryan Sentelle, U.S. Court of Appeals, District of Columbia Circuit; entertainer CeCe Winans; Lisa Beamer, wife of Todd Beamer, who died in the crash of United Airlines Flight 93 on September 11, and their daughter Morgan Kay Beamer.

Remarks During a Meeting With Congressional Leaders

February 7, 2002

Faith-Based Initiative

President Bush. I want to welcome Senator Lieberman and Senator Santorum and the delegation of U.S. Senators from both parties here at the Oval Office, to herald a great accomplishment, which is an agreement to move a Faith-Based Initiative out of the United States Senate.

All of us in this room share a priority and insist that people who don't have hope can find hope; people who wonder about the American Dream will realize the American experience is meant for them. One way to ensure that is to unleash these fantastic ar-

mies of compassion which exist all across the country.

And Government ought to stand on their side. We're in complete agreement that Government should not discriminate against faith-based programs, but it should encourage them to flourish. And so I welcome so very much the Senators here to get this really important piece of legislation through.

This legislation will not only provide a way for Government to encourage faith-based programs to exist without breaching the separation of church and state; it will also encourage charitable giving, as well. And we have an opportunity to capture the compassion of the country, focus it in the right direction. And because of the Senators here, we're taking a big step in that direction.

So Senator Lieberman, the lead sponsor, thank you for being here, appreciate you coming.

Senator Joseph I. Lieberman. Thank you, Mr. President. Thanks for your leadership on this, and thanks to Senator Santorum and all our colleagues and our staffs that worked very hard on this. I have always believed that faith, right from the beginning of this country, was one of the great unifiers of the American people. And faith has been strong enough to unify all of us as we went forward to find a constitutionally appropriate way to have a Faith-Based Initiative, to help people who want to do good works and whose desire to do good works is motivated by their faith.

This proposal really will matter to people. It creates some very important tax incentives for greater charitable giving, including saying to nonitemizers—and Mr. Secretary, you correct me, but I think something like 75 percent of taxpayers do not itemize.

Secretary Paul H. O'Neill. That's right.

Senator Lieberman. And it will give individuals an additional \$400 deduction for charitable giving and couples an additional \$800. That's a lot stronger, with all respect, than the comparable House bill. And I think it really will motivate more charitable giving. There are other tax incentives, as well.

We also have an agreement to increase funding for a group of social service programs, including, particularly, the Social Service Block Grant Program, which is very